

Thomas Jefferson to Jean Nicolas Demeunier, April 29, 1795, The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO M. DE MEUSNIER¹ J. MSS.

¹ See Vol. V., 3.

Monticello, Virginia, Apr. 29, 95.

Dear Sir. —Your favor of Mar. 30. from Philadelphia came to my hands a few days ago. That which you mention to have written from London has never been received; nor had I been able to discover what has been your fortune during the troubles of France after the death of the King. Being thoroughly persuaded that under all circumstances your conduct had been entirely innocent & friendly to the freedom of your country, I had hopes that you had not been obliged to quit your own country. Being myself a warm zealot for the attainment & enjoiment by all mankind of as much liberty, as each may exercise without injury to the equal liberty of his fellow citizens, I have lamented that in France the endeavours to obtain this should have been attended with the effusion of so much blood. I was intimate with the leading characters of the year 1789. So I was with those of the Brissotine party who succeeded them: & have always been persuaded that their views were upright. Those who have followed have been less known to me: but I have been willing to hope that they also meant the establishment of a free government in their country, excepting perhaps the party which has lately been suppressed. The government of those now at the head of affairs appears to hold out many indications of good sense, moderation & virtue; & I cannot but presume from their character as well as your own that you would find a perfect safety in the bosom of your own country. I think it fortunate for

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the United States to have become the asylum for so many virtuous patriots of different denominations: but their circumstances, with which you were so well acquainted before, enabled them to be but a bare asylum, & to offer nothing for them but an entire freedom to use their own means & faculties as they please. There is no such thing in this country as what would be called wealth in Europe. The richest are but a little at ease, & obliged

to pay the most rigorous attention to their affairs to keep them together. I do not mean to speak here of the Beaujons of America. For we have some of these tho' happily they are but ephemeral. Our public œconomy also is such as to offer drudgery and subsistence only to those entrusted with its administration, a wise & necessary precaution against the degeneracy of the public servants. In our private pursuits it is a great advantage that every honest employment is deemed honorable. I am myself a nail-maker. On returning home after an absence of ten years, I found my farms so much deranged that I saw evidently they would be a burden to me instead of a support till I could regenerate them; & consequently that it was necessary for me to find some other resource in the meantime. I thought for awhile of taking up the manufacture of pot-ash, which requires but small advances of money. I concluded at length however to begin a manufacture of nails, which needs little or no capital, & I now employ a dozen little boys from 10. to 16. years of age, overlooking all the details of their business myself & drawing from it a profit on which I can get along till I can put my farms into a course of yielding profit. My new trade of nail-making is to me in this country what an additional title of nobility or the ensigns of a new order are in Europe. In the commercial line, the grocers business is that which requires the least capital in this country. The grocer generally obtains a credit of three months, & sells for ready money so as to be able to make his paiments & obtain a new supply. But I think I have observed that your countrymen who have been obliged to work out their own fortunes here, have succeeded best with a small farm. Labour indeed is dear here, but rents are low & on the whole a reasonable profit & comfortable subsistence results. It is at the same time the most tranquil, healthy, & independent. And since you have been pleased to ask my opinion as to the best way of

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employing yourself till you can draw funds from France or return there yourself, I do presume that this is the business which would yield the most happiness & contentment to one of your philosophic turn. But at the distance I am from New York, where you seem disposed to fix yourself, & little acquainted with the circumstances of that place I am much less qualified than disposed to suggest to you employments analogous to your turn of mind & at the same time to the circumstances of your present situation. Be assured that it will always give me lively pleasure to learn that your pursuits, whatever they may be may lead you to contentment & success, being with very sincere esteem & respect, dear sir, your most obedient servant.